

new crops such as potatoes, and give more freedom to Russian women. Peter also increased his power as absolute monarch by limiting the role of the nobility and the Orthodox Church.

Although Peter's reforms helped to modernize Russia, they did not end its geographic isolation. Russia at this time was landlocked except for its long but undeveloped Arctic coast. Peter hoped to open a "window on the sea." For a brief time, he won access to the Black Sea but lost it again to the Turks. Later Peter sought to seize a strip of the Baltic coast from Sweden. He achieved this goal by defeating Sweden in the long and hard-fought Great Northern War.

Peter took advantage of his victory to build a city where the Neva River delta meets the Gulf of Finland. He named the city St. Petersburg after his patron saint. In 1712, Peter proclaimed St. Petersburg the new capital of Russia. There the royal court met in a splendid palace, the Peterhof, which symbolically faced the west. There too Peter planned the Academy of Sciences to encourage the growth of learning. After the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, the city on the Neva was renamed Leningrad. Now, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it is again St. Petersburg. No matter what the name, the city is a monument to the power and vision of its founder, Peter the Great.

Austria and Prussia rose to power.

Between France and Russia lie the rolling plains and spreading mountains of central Europe. For centuries, the dominant powers of this region had been the Holy Roman Empire, the Kingdom of Poland, and the Ottoman empire (map, page 453). None of the three, however, had developed a strong central government or army. These weaknesses permitted ambitious ruling families in Austria and Prussia to expand their power.

In the early 1700's, the Hapsburg family of Austria ruled an empire that included Austria, Bohemia, and Hungary. The Hapsburg emperor Charles VI recognized that these lands lacked real unity. He worried that his empire might be divided after his death because his daughter and heir, Maria Theresa, might be unable to defend it. Charles therefore persuaded a number of other rulers to sign an agreement that the lands of the Hapsburg empire should remain together under the rule of Maria Theresa. In theory, this agreement assured Maria Theresa a peaceful reign. In reality, it tempted the rising ambitions of the Hohenzollerns, the ruling family of Prussia (map, page 453).

During the preceding century, a series of stern Prussian rulers had transformed their small feudal state into a major European power. In 1740—the same year that Charles VI died—a new ruler came to power

in Prussia. This was Frederick II, the most ambitious of his line. Almost at once, Frederick broke the agreement with Austria and invaded Austria's rich and strategic province of Silesia.

Frederick's invasion of Silesia disrupted Europe's delicate balance of power. The result was the War of the Austrian Succession (1640–1648), in which France supported Prussia, while Russia and Britain aided Austria. In the end, Frederick kept Silesia. The war left Austria determined to get revenge.

To strengthen its position, Austria sought a shift in the European balance of power. This involved allying with France, traditionally the strongest continental power and the enemy of Austria. Because the ambitions of Frederick II also threatened France, that nation became an ally of Austria and Russia. France's longtime rival, Britain, allied with Prussia. The conflict that resulted was the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), fought not only in Europe but also in North America and India. The outcome was a victory for Prussia and Britain. Prussia again kept Silesia. From France, Britain gained Canada and trading bases in India. Britain emerged from the war as a great power in Europe and the dominant empire overseas.

Chapter Review

Define absolutism, mercantilism, export, import, balance of trade, balance of power

Identify Louis XIV, Versailles, Jean Colbert, Peter II, St. Petersburg, Maria Theresa, Silesia, Frederick II

Answer

1. (a) How did Louis XIV add to the wealth and power of France? (b) How did wars of conquest undermine his achievements?
2. (a) Why had Russia been cut off from western Europe? (b) How did Peter the Great modernize Russia?
3. Why did Frederick II attack Austria?

Critical Thinking

4. How does the principle of the balance of power illustrate the role that conflict and cooperation play in international affairs?

Connecting Past and Present

The Versailles palace, once a symbol of absolutism, is today one of France's most popular tourist attractions. Each year, thousands of people tour Louis XIV's bedroom, admire the Hall of Mirrors (page 444), and stroll through the palace gardens. Rooms where the Grand Monarch made decisions on war and peace are now silent reminders of the age when absolute monarchs ruled Europe.